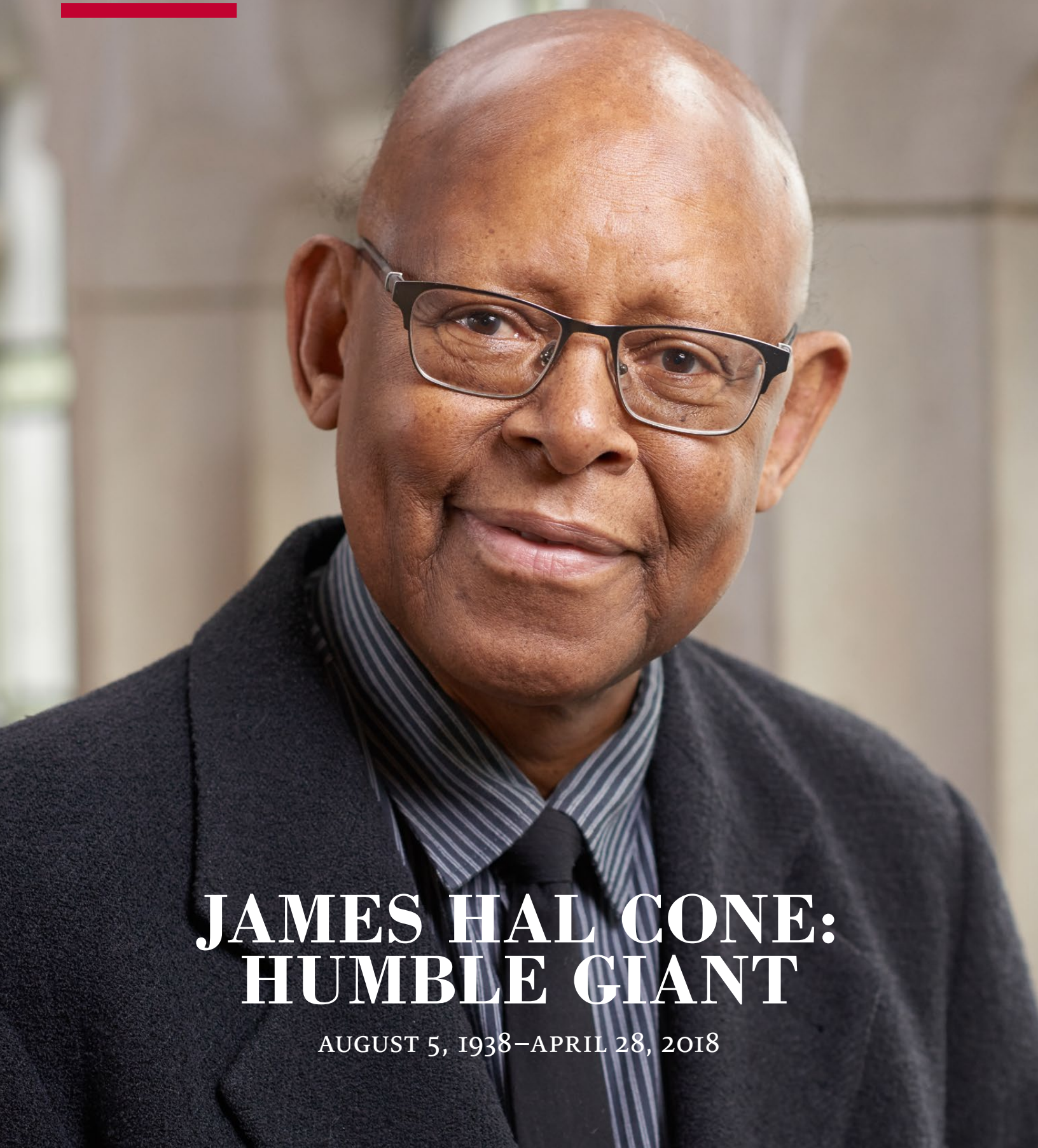


UNION Network



JAMES HAL CONE: HUMBLE GIANT

AUGUST 5, 1938–APRIL 28, 2018



Members of Union's faculty and administration gathered on campus on March 21 with Louisville Seminary's President Michael Jinkins (back row, second from left) for the presentation of the 2018 Grawemeyer Award in Religion to Dr. James Cone. At Dr. Cone's right is his daughter, Robynn. (See page 13.)

James Hal Cone | 1938–2018

As this issue was going to print, we learned of the passing of Dr. James Hal Cone. The cover story was always planned to be a feature article about Dr. Cone, and now our cover stands as a tribute to his life and legacy. In so many ways, James Cone has *been* Union Theological Seminary for the past 50 years. To say his death leaves a void is a staggering understatement. His prophetic voice, deep kindness, and fierce commitment to Black liberation embodied not just the very best of our seminary, but of the theological field as a whole and of American prophetic thought and action. —*The Rev. Dr. Serene Jones*

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Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of the 2017–18 academic year and our 180th commencement, I look forward to watching our graduates move into the world and make their mark in society. These are trying times; this year has been fraught with repeated assaults on the values we hold dear. Throughout, we have remained true to our core mission and beliefs and have spoken out when the times call upon us to do so. Here are snapshots of some of our most critical statements.

Gun Reform

For decades, the NRA has framed even the most common-sense gun regulations as assaults on American liberty—as if owning an AR-15 were what it meant to be free. They’ve spent millions buying politicians craven enough to value campaign contributions over innocent lives. All the while, they’ve lied to the American people, stoking fear while promising guns as salvation. The result has been the rapid proliferation of firearms—which now outnumber people—as the NRA has shamelessly profited from the ensuing bloodshed.

For too long, we’ve let the gun lobby’s pernicious agenda set the terms for national debate. This must cease. It’s time to follow new voices, ones that do not profit from violence. Listen to the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School; their deep lament and anger

indict our past failure to act. Our children are marching in the street, demanding change. Will we march beside them? The answer to this question reveals the God we pray to—whether we worship the God of love and peace or the NRA’s blood-soaked idol.

DACA/Immigration

We are Christians and profess our belief in Jesus Christ. His life story and the nature of his ministry make clear that following him means rejecting our president’s action and standing in solidarity with our nation’s Dreamers. This is not simply a Christian conviction, however. Almost all faith traditions contain some form of God’s command to love our neighbors as ourselves. These are our neighbors. Our families. Our students. Our coworkers. Our friends.

DACA recipients put their faith in our government when promised the opportunity to follow their dreams. This is a monstrous betrayal of that trust. To cast these precious kids back into the shadows, or to deport them from the only home many have ever known, is unthinkable. This is a line we cannot cross.

Anti-LGBTQ Legislation

This policy shift is an abdication of the Justice Department’s responsibility to seek justice for all U.S. citizens and an affront to the sacred creation of all human beings. Without the protections of the Civil Rights Act, transgender people will be fired from their jobs or refused housing, as just two examples of its effects, simply for expressing their full humanity. Moreover, this withdrawal of protections exacerbates the potential for outright violence and persecution.

The Union Theological Seminary and EDS at Union community stands in solidarity with LGBTQ persons and all people of conscience in this country in affirming the full humanity and sacred dignity of all persons.

Tax Reform Bill

As an educational institution committed to the values emboldened on our crest, “Unity, Truth, and Love,” we are horrified by this so-called “tax reform.” It is

an affront not only to these values; it destroys any notion that education is a right of all, that it seeks truth, and that it celebrates the pursuit of justice and love. Like those enrolled in most graduate programs, our students rely upon generous scholarship aid and untaxed tuition waivers; many simply cannot afford a Union education without these. To tax students for pursuing an education, and for not possessing the familial wealth to finance that education independently, is simply wrong. It’s bad for the academy and bad for our country.

Next Steps

In spite of the times, I remain hopeful that the theological education and community that is forged here at Union, in accordance with our mission to foster compassionate wisdom, has formed courageous faith leaders who will make a difference wherever they serve.

One way we can do that is by joining the Poor People’s Campaign as participants embark on 40 days of civil disobedience, beginning May 13, across 25 states, leading to a mass mobilization at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., June 21. We join in the fight against systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, and the nation’s distorted morality. Together, we are a force for justice, equality, and positive change in our communities, states, and nation.

Throughout, we are mindful that while we are called to speak to this and every political moment, this call does not arise from our political bodies. Rather, we are bound to speak by our faith in a God who demands all crooked paths be made straight. It remains our greatest joy to share in this mission with each new cohort of students, and we look forward to witnessing how the divine spirit will move us closer to God’s justice.

Peace,

The Rev. Dr. Serene Jones
President and Johnston Family Professor
for Religion & Democracy

Union Making News

New Leadership to Positively Transform the World



A New Poor People's Campaign Dawns

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival officially launched at a Washington, D.C., press conference last December. This bold grassroots movement seeks to eradicate poverty, dismantle systemic racism, reduce military spending to fund social services, and end the ecological devastation that's swiftly destroying our planet.

Co-chaired by the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, Union's visiting professor of Public Theology & Activism, and the Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis '04, '14, co-director of Union's Kairos Center, the campaign has now organized more than 30 state chapters and has become a rallying point for those who seek to bring justice into this dark political moment.

It was only fitting that such a monumental undertaking begin so auspiciously. Alongside Barber and Theoharis at the press conference, leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Church of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian Universalist Association, and Union for Reform Judaism made a strident call for all faith leaders to join this movement. True to the campaign's ethos, however, the conference was primarily driven by the voices of those directly affected by immoral government policies.

Fast-food worker Terence Wise said he and his wife were unable to provide food and housing for their family—despite working full time.


"Having to hear my three little girls' stomachs rumble—that's something no parent should have to endure," he said. Another speaker, Callie Greer, lamented her daughter's premature death from cancer—left untreated because her state government refused to expand Medicaid. "No one should have to bury their child in America because they don't have health care," she said with sadness and fury.

The campaign's decision to privilege and elevate these voices—to be a movement led not for the poor and oppressed but by the poor and oppressed—is its deepest strength. Together, participants aim to shake this country to its unjust foundations. **U**

“No one should have to bury their child in America because they don't have health care.”

The Truths We Need

In February, Union hosted the second Spirit of Justice conversation. Following a riveting fall dialogue with Angela Davis, Michelle Alexander—Union’s visiting professor of social justice—spoke with acclaimed journalist Naomi Klein. Their discussion highlighted the intersection of climate change, colonialism, and capitalism—showing how these seemingly diverse issues are, in fact, inextricably linked.

“In Puerto Rico, they are using people’s desperation and struggle to survive as an excuse to privatize public services,” Klein observed. “The people who are treated as most disposable are black and brown people, not just in the United States but around the world.” As the conversation progressed, the link between ecological change, racism, and people’s dislocation was driven home time and again. By the evening’s end, it felt like Alexander spoke for the entire audience in her pointed lament: “There are communities in this nation that are drowning ... Why doesn’t anybody care?” 




“In Puerto Rico, they are using people’s desperation and struggle to survive as an excuse to privatize public services.”

—Naomi Klein



200 Buddhists Gather at Union →

As a part of Union’s new Thich Nhat Hanh Program for Engaged Buddhism, the Seminary hosted “Buddhist Action: Morals, Vision, and Justice” in February, led by program director Sensei Greg Snyder. The day’s speakers stressed the importance of Buddhist prophetic voices in speaking against systemic injustices. As Rebecca Li put it, “The debate about whether Buddhists should be socially engaged is over.” 



Positive Faith Gives a Voice to People Living with HIV

By John Thornhill

“Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live.”

DESPITE MEDICAL ADVANCES, an HIV diagnosis can still be a profoundly shocking experience, accompanied by fear, anxiety, and isolation. HIV is widely misunderstood and under-recognized in faith communities. The stigma faced by Christians living with HIV often prevents them from bringing the totality of their lives into Christian fellowship.

Last year I became involved in a ground-breaking project to support people living with HIV. Positive Faith is a faith-based, open-access, online resource that aims to empower and give voice to people of faith who are living with HIV. In a variety of short videos, Christians from diverse traditions who are living with HIV speak frankly about HIV and faith. They offer pastoral care, assurance of God’s love, and ideas for welcome and inclusion. Available for free download, the resources are available worldwide for use by congregations, pastors, caregivers, and other groups or individuals.

“Spiritual health and physical health are connected,” says Peter Smith, Archbishop of Southwark in London. Positive Faith seeks to build a bridge between faith and human flourishing through words that are healing rather than clumsy, marked by suspicion, or unspoken.

Positive Faith was devised by Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support (CAPS), a voluntary network of Christians in the

United Kingdom and Ireland offering welcome and support to people affected by HIV and promoting HIV prevention and well-being. CAPS describes itself as “a voice in the church for people living with HIV” and “a voice of faith in the world of HIV.”

The project was funded by the UK government’s Public Health England HIV Prevention Innovation Fund. Positive Faith recognizes that developments in treatment have significantly improved both quality of life and life expectancy for people living with HIV. Yet an HIV diagnosis still may be experienced as profoundly stigmatizing and a marker for wider exclusion in society and church. HIV disproportionately affects those already marginalized because of sexuality, ethnicity, and poverty.

An HIV diagnosis can be framed in terms of a journey—a complex, life-changing experience with unexpected twists and turns, long roads, and hidden horizons. People on the journey can experience suspicion and fear but can also encounter loving and unconditional welcome. It is a journey that continually invites individuals to re-evaluate their priorities, commitments, and values, as well as their relationships with family, friends, community, and God.

Created and shaped by Christians affected by HIV, Positive Faith is a point of navigation for that journey. The short films empower Christians from diverse traditions to speak movingly,

honestly, and with hope about how HIV has affected their life and faith journeys. They reach out pastorally and in solidarity with others who seek to make sense of their diagnosis. The films may be used as pedagogical tools in church groups, schools, and colleges to create more aware, inclusive, and welcoming communities. The films open up ways for difficult and often avoided conversations about sex, relationships, and HIV to be conducted in the language of faith.

The project reflects the principles of radical inclusion and welcome that underpin the work of CAPS. The network supports both women and men,

The Positive Faith Team and invited guests: Archbishop Peter Smith, Bishop Christopher Chessun, and Fr. Timothy Radcliffe at the Positive Faith launch at Romero House, London, October 2017



PHOTO: ANTHONY TYNAN-KELLY



Film participants: Rev. Ije Ajibade, Hannah Musa and Angelina Namibia

young and old, married and single, gay and straight, those recently diagnosed and those who have lived with HIV for many years. It reaches out to people from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe. Their voices can be heard in the Positive Faith videos. This is their story. And their voices are a gift to a church that so often misunderstands or holds its silence. Their voices, formed in a community of friendship and love, echo the healing words of a God who comes to live among us in the most unexpected of ways. Positive Faith celebrates that which binds and strengthens humanity in its full diversity. It invites faith communities to aspire to be fully that place of welcome which is the body of Christ, as expressed in the following song:

*Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions.
All are welcome; all are welcome;
all are welcome in this place. ♪*

Learn more about Positive Faith at positivefaith.net.

John Thornhill, S.T.M. '97, is a Trustee for CAPS and a member of the Positive Catholics network. Thornhill is a worker for the Congregation of the Passion in the U.K. (passionists-uk.org), an inclusive Christian fellowship which seeks to find Christ at the margins and to live a commitment to "welcoming the stranger."

Did you know? By Kevin McGee

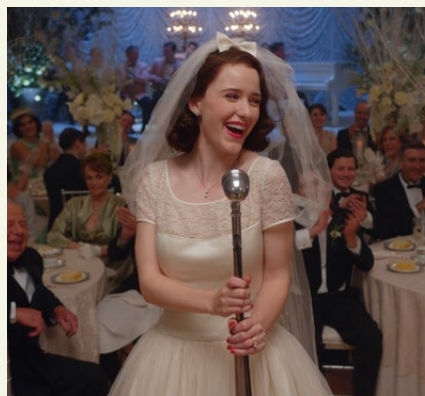
Coming to a Screen Near You— Union Campus Is a Popular Set for TV and Films

FIFTEEN TO TWENTY PRODUCTION CREWS for television, cable, and film use Union Seminary as a location during the course of the year. The quad is a frequent set for filming, but so are the Seminary's hallways and cloisters, classrooms, offices, and even the McGiffert roof.

Sometimes exciting and at other times disrupting, the filming produces income for the Seminary, so students, staff, and faculty all soldier on and keep phone cameras handy. The Seminary raised just under \$400K for fiscal year 2017 from film productions and has added approximately \$110K to seminary income so far for fiscal year 2018.

The Seminary was portrayed as Hudson University for *Law and Order*, with a scene of students (played by actors) clashing in a riot on the quad over the status of an old and controversial statue as a sexual assault was discovered. The Union campus has also provided sets for the Princeton library, Yale's gay and lesbian social in *The Normal Heart*, a war college for *Madam Secretary*, and the deck of a cruise ship for *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*.

The refectory was turned into a glamorous banquet hall for the wedding of Mrs. Maisel in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. It also became a turn-of-



the-20th-century men's club dining room for a St. Patrick's Day formal banquet, which included a bagpipe band parading through the dinner, in *Boardwalk Empire*. Seminary rooms rented for productions may be redesigned in any manner for a scene, but after filming they must be returned to the way they were originally found. *Boardwalk Empire*

production designers saw a photo of Union's social hall from the 1950s and replicated it, with the Seminary's blessing. After filming, they left behind a fresh paint job, drapes, and carpets.

Among the more than 50 shows containing scenes shot at Union are *Mona Lisa Smile*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Sopranos*, *Madoff*, *Masters of Sex*, and *Orange Is the New Black*. Celebrity directors who have shot scenes at Union include Ron Howard (*A Beautiful Mind*), Robert De Niro (*The Good Shepherd*), Barbra Streisand (*The Mirror Has Two Faces*), and Morgan Freeman (*Madam Secretary*). *Law and Order*, in all its iterations, has used the Seminary as a location for many years and still finds new corners to shoot in or from.

In one of the most appropriate scenes for the seminary setting, the Bonhoeffer Room was used as a funeral parlor in *Kings*. For a scene in *Madam Secretary*, a very authentic confessional was added to the narthex of James Chapel. And in a scene from *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, the camera followed a character on the way to Union to hear a speech by Cornel West. ♪



The Very Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas '82, '88, dean of EDS at Union

Episcopal Divinity School at Union: THE FIRST SEMESTER

In late August, a new class of students will arrive on the Union Theological Seminary campus, buzzing with excitement at being in New York City, anticipating new friendships to be forged during student orientation, and envisioning a future as part of the next generation of faith leaders to come from this historic institution.

For some—the master of divinity in Anglican Studies students—there will also be the excitement of knowing they are members of the inaugural class of the Episcopal Divinity School at Union (EDS at Union), an exciting affiliation aimed at preparing M.Div. students for social-justice ministries in the Episcopal/Anglican Church. A highlight of this new chapter will be a special convocation October 31 with the Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. The convocation celebrates both the EDS-Union affiliation and the installation of the Very Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas '82, '88, as the first African American woman dean of an Episcopal seminary.

Once the dust settles after these major events, students in the inaugural EDS at Union class can expect a first semester featuring unique curriculum, co-curricular workshops, and a focused worship and spiritual life.

A FOCUS ON VOCATION

Students' formation will begin even before they arrive on campus. In June, EDS at Union will invite its incoming class of Anglican Studies students—as well as the wider Episcopal Church—to spend part of the summer reading Bryan Stevenson's book *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. While the book may be viewed from many angles, students will be asked to explore it through the lens of vocation. What drew Stevenson, a young lawyer who founded the Equal Justice Initiative, to the work of defending death row inmates? What sustained him through incredible setbacks and dangers? What role was played by his faith and the faith of the people he served? This community-wide reading will culminate in an early-September forum that will discuss Stevenson's book as a vocational journey.

Discernment and vocation will continue to be the focus as students begin

to take courses at Union. The majority of first-year courses are required for all master of divinity students, regardless of their concentration. EDS at Union students will have only one additional requirement: the Anglican Studies first-year seminar. Taught by Dean Douglas, the seminar will help students explore the theological, spiritual, and practical implications of their ministerial calls within the Episcopal/Anglican Church. Students will read a variety of call narratives, develop their own vocational statements, and engage with practitioners in diverse ministerial settings. In keeping with EDS at Union's mission, they will explore what it means to be called to be faith leaders focused on social justice and the dismantling of racism in the world.

BUILDING PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRIES

Students will also have the opportunity to take evening workshops on practical leadership skills for translating theological ideals and vocational calls into effective social justice leadership. These workshops, conducted by Episcopal faith leaders, will cover a wide range of topics, such as leading English-Spanish worship (September), engaging local government



On April 12, Miguel Escobar '07 (right), EDS at Union's director of Anglican Studies, met with the Rev. Dr. Ryan Kuratko, the new chaplain at Columbia University, to explore partnership opportunities



The Rev. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White, Christiane Brooks Johnson Professor of Psychology & Religion, leads EDS at Union students in a Eucharist service

representatives (led by the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations) (October), and best practices for faith leaders on writing op-eds for local newspapers (November), to name a few. Opportunities continue to be added to the workshop schedule.

EPISCOPAL WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

A robust worship schedule centered primarily around Morning Prayer will strengthen the spiritual lives of students. Anglican Studies students will help lead Morning Prayer three times a week for the wider community. Students will also assist in organizing Eucharist services at Union's James Chapel and participate in organized visits to evening worship services at some of the many Episcopal congregations within walking distance of the Seminary.

Because Latinas/os are among the fastest growing segments of the Episcopal Church, EDS at Union has made a commitment to incorporate a bilingual element into every worship service organized by Anglican Studies students, so that students can practice leading and participating in both English and Spanish.

Students will be organized into peer groups with clergy mentors/spiritual directors to help them integrate their diverse experiences in classes, workshops, and worship. This peer group work will be punctuated and deepened by two quiet days per semester led by an Episcopal priest and spiritual director. These days will serve as opportunities for exploring practices for sustaining lifelong, social justice-focused ministries in the Episcopal Church.

BEYOND THE FIRST SEMESTER

The first semester of EDS at Union will lay the foundation for students' formation. The first-year focus on vocation will evolve into a second-year focus on the theology, history, and practice of Episcopal worship.

Students who enter the Anglican Studies program are in for a rich experience. When they graduate, they will leave prepared not simply to serve in churches but to be the church in a globally diverse world. They will be fully committed to making God's justice a reality. **U**

To learn more about the course requirements for all three years of the Anglican Studies program, visit utsnyc.edu/eds.



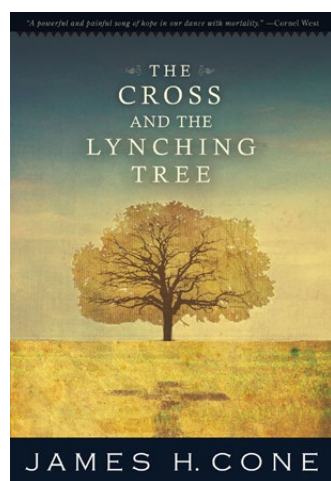
James Hal Cone: HUMBLE GIANT

in the
MOVEMENT
for
BLACK
LIBERATION

BY NIKIA SMITH ROBERT

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was completed prior to the death of Dr. James H. Cone on April 28, 2018.

The Cross and the Lynching Tree, by James H. Cone, earned the prestigious 2018 Grawemeyer Award in Religion. Cone was among five winners who were awarded \$100,000 by the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the University of Louisville. The purpose of the award is to honor and publicize creative insights into the relationship between human beings and the divine, and to recognize ways in which this relationship may inspire or empower human beings to attain wholeness, integrity, or meaning, either individually or in community.



The Cross and the Lynching Tree

(MARYKNOLL, N.Y.:
ORBIS BOOKS, 2011)

1. Prior to Garrett, Cone went to Shorter College (a two-year unaccredited school of the AME Church in Little Rock, Ark.) and transferred to Philander Smith College (an accredited Methodist school).

BOLD BELIEVER

The belief that God is Black and on the side of the oppressed, for some, is a bold claim. For Rev. Dr. James Hal Cone, however, this is a supposition that is unexceptional to his lived experiences and the genesis for his emergence as the “Father of Black Theology.”

Growing up in rural Bearden, Ark., in a politically charged climate of anti-Black racism, segregation, and economic inequality, Cone wrestled to understand what it meant to be Black and Christian in America. In response, he drew from the faith of his mother and found refuge in the liberating gospel at Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. He accepted the call to ministry at age 16 and was a pastor until graduation. Cone pursued graduate studies at Garrett Biblical Institute (now known as Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) and earned a Ph.D. degree from Northwestern University in 1965.¹ From humble beginnings, Cone entered graduate school with the security of his mother’s faith and inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. But he left influenced by the rhetoric of Malcolm X and questioning his faith. As he states in his book, *Black Theology & Black Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997), in looking to reconcile spiritual discernment (Martin) with political agitation (Malcolm) against the backdrop of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, “black liberation theology emerged out of a black people’s struggle with nonviolence (Christian) and self-defense.”

As the Bill and Judith Moyers Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary, Cone embraces his personal trinity of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and James Baldwin to find ways to reconcile the gospel message of liberation with the reality of Black oppression. This is framed by Cone’s bold belief in his book, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997), that “Christ is black, therefore, not because of some cultural or psychological need of black people, but because and only because Christ really enters into our world where the poor, the despised, and the black are, disclosing that he is with them, enduring their humiliation and pain and transforming oppressed slaves into liberated servants.” Cone’s contention that Jesus is ontologically Black radically challenged white supremacy by asserting Black people’s humanity as a reflection of a God of the oppressed. This central claim leads to another bold belief: Jesus’ crucifixion was a first-century lynching.

BRILLIANT THINKER

In his latest monograph, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011), Cone explores the cross in relationship to the lynching of Black bodies. I recall sitting in Cone’s Christology seminar prior to the release of his book. We sat in class circulating *Without Sanctuary*, which photographically chronicled lynching in America. I remember the vivid pictures depicting the bestial torture of black bodies hanging like strange fruit from poplar trees. It visually unveiled the horrors

of a lynching era between 1880 and 1940, when white Christians lynched nearly 5,000 Black men and women in a manner with obvious echoes of the Roman crucifixion of Jesus. As I thumbed through the wretched images, there was one account I could not shake from memory. In fact, it haunts me today. Feeling rage, reproach, and regret, I winced at the grim sight of the lifeless bodies of Laura Nelson and her son hanging from a bridge in Okemah, Okla., on May 25, 1911. It was a spectacle lynching. Scores of white men watched. She was fully clothed and still wearing her wedding ring. Her son's pants were at his feet; he was likely castrated so that his genitalia would grace the mantel of a home as a trophy of white supremacy. It is believed that Nelson's son shot a sheriff when he and others raided the Nelsons' farm looking for a stolen cow. The family was detained and in the middle of the night, nearly 40 men dragged Nelson and her son from their jail cells. Nelson was raped before they were lynched from a railroad bridge over the North Canadian River. The following morning, a photographer arrived to ceremoniously capture this cruelty and circulated the photographs as postcards.

Cone explains that in the wake of the South losing the Civil War, lynching emerged as a way to control and invoke fear after the end of slavery, so that Black people would remain docile and disciplined to work the fields for white people who profited from their labor. In *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Cone's critically compelling analysis is nearly as vivid as the visual depiction of Laura Nelson and her son. He argues that Christians cannot understand the tragedy of the cross of Jesus without seeing Black bodies hanging at the lynching tree. In this vein, to understand the cross and the lynching tree is to recognize the tragedy of crucifixion but also to appreciate the beauty of resurrection. This is to say, the defeat of death does not have the last word. Jesus snatches victory from defeat. And as an emblem of hope, Black people are empowered to confront and overcome injustices, including the atrocities of modern-day lynching. Thus, the cross and the lynching tree break the silence on race in America.

Cone explores today's criminal justice system as a modern-day lynching. He contends that "Both the cross and the lynching tree were symbols of terror, instruments of torture and execution, reserved primarily for slaves, criminals, and insurrectionists—the lowest of the low of society." Locating criminals at the lynching tree and the cross has significant implications for understanding Jesus' proximity to criminality and the warehousing of Black bodies in the U.S. prison industrial complex. It highlights an immoral arc of vicarious punishment that bends from antiquity to antebellum to an age of mass incarceration. While lynching has been outlawed, Cone aptly understands the criminal justice system as a legal manifestation of lynching in its orientation to intimidate, terrorize, and murder Black people. He writes, "Whites could kill blacks knowing that a jury of their peers would free them but would convict and execute any black who dared to challenge the white way of life. White juries, judges, and lawyers kept America 'safe' from the threat of the black community." In this sense, the cross and the lynching tree were reserved for ethnic minorities—the outcast and

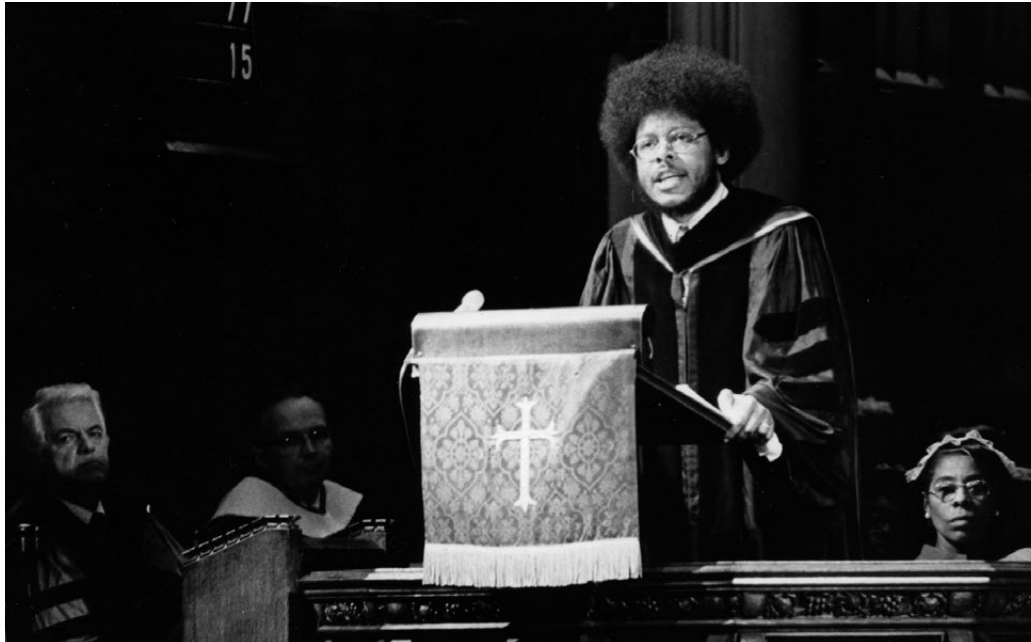
outlier—just as prisons are disproportionately occupied by Black and brown people in the carceral state.

From 1980 to 2008, the number of people incarcerated in America quadrupled—from roughly 500,000 to 2.3 million people. The warehousing of Black bodies by the prison industrial complex eerily evokes echoes of lynching and crucifixion. Cone supports this symbolic relationship between the cross, lynching, and mass incarceration. He states:

"The lynching of black America is taking place in the criminal justice system where nearly one-third of black men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight are in prisons, jails, on parole, or waiting for their day in court. Nearly one half of the more than two million people in prisons are black. That is one million black people behind bars, more than in colleges. Through private prisons and the 'war against drugs' whites have turned the brutality of their racial legal system into a profit-making venture for dying white towns and cities throughout America." He continues, "That is why the term 'legal' lynching is still relevant today. One can lynch a person without a rope or a tree."

Mindful of past critiques of his work, such as his omission of the experiences of women, Cone explains how surrogacy is an extension of lynching. Women constituted only 2 percent of Blacks actually lynched, but violence against women was widespread. Women were sometimes substitutes for Black men who escaped white mob violence, and they endured torture, beatings, scarring, mutilation, hanging, burns, tarring and feathering, stabbing, dragging, whipping, and rape. Cone, therefore, corrects his past patriarchal propensities and speaks to the invisibility of women in lynching discourse. This inclusion connects a history of women and lynching to the punishment of Black incarcerated women in the contemporary carceral state. As in antiquity and the antebellum period, women in an age of mass incarceration often suffer harsher punishment than their male counterparts who committed even more egregious crimes. While women have in recent times been counted as the fastest growing population in prisons, they remain disproportionately criminalized for exercising moral agency to survive and secure quality of life. Punishment, therefore, has historically and is currently a heavier burden on the bodies of Black women.

Establishing the relationship among crucifixion, lynching, and carcerality is arguably the greatest contribution of *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* and the larger project of Black liberation theology. Although prisons are ancillary to Cone's main



Professor Cone preaches in James Chapel in 1969, shortly after he joined the faculty

argument, a tremendous value of *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* is its ability to point beyond itself to imagine other liberating possibilities. Cone's peripheral glimpse of the criminal justice system underscores the pressing reality that prisons are a modern-day form of lynching that requires our full attention. Unequivocally, mass incarceration is the perennial problem of the 21st century. There can be no talk of a God of the oppressed or lynching without understanding the God of lockdown America and the hyper-criminalization of Black bodies. Without question, God's in-breaking consisted of occupying a Black criminalized body. This proves God's solidarity with the enslaved, lynched, and imprisoned. A brilliant thinker, Cone has constructed a theological account of the cross in connection to the lynching tree that engenders liberating paradigms for all apparatuses of punishment, including the carceral state.

BENEFICENT BEING

Finally, it is hard to talk about Cone as a bold believer and brilliant thinker without also considering his beneficence. An admirable quality of Cone is his ability to connect head and heart. He has a stern and yet gentle way of engaging others. Cone can scold and encourage simultaneously. I am grateful to have benefited from his pastoral care that nurtured me in the brutal spaces of academe. I appreciated that on some occasions Cone would write in the margins of my paper, "Too preachy," to ensure I maintained persuasive rigor in my argumentation; and later he would write in the same margins, "You should consider a Ph.D." Cone is an encourager, and his passion for interpreting the cross from the experiences of Black people inspires his students to continue the work of liberation. Cone has produced generations of academics, ministers, and activists, but his goodness makes

each of us want to be better human beings. One by one, Cone has made us more conscious and committed to the struggle for freedom. He has a peculiar way of upsetting allies and bystanders while igniting courage in the naïve and offering guidance to the revolutionary to deeply engage and act in solidarity with those who suffer. In the spirit of Martin, Malcolm, and Baldwin, Cone is moved by love and justice through prophetic resistance and radical political protest. This ethic permeates both head and heart and infuses the very depths of his beneficent being.

CRITIQUE & SELF-CORRECTION

Certainly, Cone is not above repudiation. Most notably, he has been challenged by feminist and womanist thinkers and other dissenting interlocutors. Cone has been scrutinized for the patriarchal orientation of Black theology that omits female voices, excludes expressions of Black and African diasporic spirituality, and problematically constructs a sadistic cross-centered Christology that is not liberating for all bodies. Still, Cone stands tall before the mirror of critique and publicly self-corrects to create space for reflection and divergent ideas to emerge. The ability to contribute constructive frameworks that advance canonical thought and remain open to critique is only made possible by a posture of humility that is at the heart of Cone's solidarity with the least of these.

Indeed, Cone both receives critique and gives it with the same integrity. When critically engaging the scholarship of other influential thinkers in relationship to the gospel and liberation, Cone has a litmus test that is based on the inextricability of theology and experience. A theology that fails to emerge from experience to interpret culture in ways relevant for the current time and that does not offer hope through a God who acts in solidarity with the



oppressed is idolatrous. For this reason, Cone departed from Karl Barth despite having written his dissertation on “The Doctrine of Man in the Anthropology of Karl Barth” (Northwestern, 1965). Similarly, Cone challenged Reinhold Niebuhr’s ability to do theology without engaging his social context and responding to the political climate in the U.S. during the first half of the 20th century. Niebuhr, who was on faculty at Union and lived in Harlem, was silent in addressing the racial injustices that immediately surrounded him. Cone writes,

“Although Niebuhr is often called a ‘prophet,’ and he claimed that ‘all theology really begins with Amos,’ he was no prophet on race. Prophets take risks and speak out in righteous indignation against society’s treatment of the poor, even risking their lives, as we see in the martyrdom of Jesus and Martin King. Niebuhr took no risks for blacks ... Niebuhr was by no means alone in his failure to express prophetic rage against racial injustice and his silence on lynching.”

Cone’s point that Niebuhr was not alone in his failure to express prophetic rage against racial injustice is a conviction that, if we are honest, also applies to the white supremacy that pervades churches and critiques any theology counter to God’s liberating message for those who are oppressed. In this regard, Cone raises a question that critiques us all: “Can one really understand the theological meaning of Jesus on a Roman cross without seeing him first through the image of blacks on the lynching tree?” This probing question holds the church and its constituents accountable. We cannot evade the risks of faith by only seeing the cross as central to the gospel message and ignore the tragedy of racial injustice that dehumanizes Black bodies and impedes freedom.

FUTURE FREEDOM

Even with the recognition of the Grawemeyer Award, Cone remains passionately committed to the struggle for freedom. His boldness and brilliance and beneficence continue to push those of us who have sat in his classroom, and those who may have only read his books, to connect a history fraught by violence with the possibilities of a future fulfilled by freedom. A future in which the immoral arc of white supremacy eventually breaks, and where an all-encompassing moral arc of the universe

prevails and bends toward justice. It is by way of this arc, from the cross to the lynching tree and prisons, that Cone compels us to conceptualize a society where, “Though we are not fully free and the dream not fully realized, yet, we are not what we used to be and not what we will be. The cross and the lynching tree can help us to know where we have come and where we must go.” In his own humble way, Cone teaches us that there is beauty in tragedy and that with a God of the oppressed on our side, neither lynching, incarceration, nor death has the last word. We can remember from whence we have come and look forward to where we are going—toward a future of freedom where the dream of liberation is fully realized. **U**

Rev. Nikia Smith Robert, M.Div., '09, is a Ph.D. student in the Religion, Ethics, and Society program at Claremont School of Theology. Robert is an ordained Itinerant Elder in African Methodism. She is a newly elected representative to the Student Caucus of the board of directors for the Society of Christian Ethics and serves on the steering committee for the American Academy of Religion's Liberation Theologies group. Robert lives in California with her husband and three children.



James Cone (seated). BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Gary Dorrien '78, Larry Rasmussen '70, Michael Jenkins, President, Louisville Seminary. (Not pictured: Donald Shriver.)

In March 2018, James Cone was presented with the Grawemeyer Award in Religion in a special ceremony on Union's campus. The annual prize is awarded jointly by Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the University of Louisville. Cone is the fourth Union faculty member to receive the award. In 2017, Gary Dorrien was awarded the Grawemeyer for his book, *The New Abolition: W.E.B. DuBois and the Black Social Gospel* (2016). In 2009, Donald W. Shriver, Jr., President Emeritus and W.E. Dodge Professor Emeritus of Applied Christianity, received the award for *Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember its Misdeeds* (2005). In 1997, Larry L. Rasmussen, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics, received the prize for *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (1997).

Encountering Dr. Cone



I remember the day vividly. He wore a black brimmed hat tilted to the side to complement his dark trench coat. With intentional, smooth, choreographed strides across the classroom, he introduced himself in bebop rhythm. I was in total shock. My freshman professor for African American Religion not only embodied jazz, but he was the “improv” to my

predominantly white private college experience. It was in this class that I was introduced to James H. Cone through the religiously provocative and socially progressive book, *Black Theology & Black Power*. For the first time, I found in academic literature an entry point to meaningfully connect theology with Blackness and my lived experiences. It was as if the deepest recesses of my soul awakened and my journey of becoming was seemingly demystified. Cone described my realities in words I could not find for myself. He (re)introduced me to God. She was Black and on my side. This melanin-like God acted in solidarity for the liberation of the oppressed, including this poor Black girl from Harlem reared in a single-parent home blighted by systemic injustices.

After graduating from college and pursuing a successful career on Wall Street, I returned to Cone—not in the prophetic prose of a publication, but in his classroom. As a master of divinity student at Union Theological Seminary, I traded my bebop professor for one who embodied the spirituals and the blues. Cone was my pastor in the classroom, hero in printed margins, uncle in my imagination, and sage in living color. He provided the ideological framings I needed to transcend the futility of marginality with a theology that centered Black people in the struggle for freedom.

As a self-identified Cone-ite, I have always been befuddled by this question: How does the incomparable Rev. Dr. James H. Cone make an unprecedented impact in the field of religion as the “Father of Black Theology,” produce groundbreaking publications such as *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, receive the 2018 Grawemeyer Award in Religion, and encounter iconic veneration with national and international acclaim by all walks of life, and somehow manage to remain humble, accessible, and (quite frankly) likeable?

Cone is a bold believer who unapologetically accepts the liberating gospel. He is a brilliant thinker who synthesizes experience with theology to engage Black people's struggle for freedom in relationship to a God of the oppressed. He is a beneficent being who has encouraged students from the shared spaces of the classroom to intimate gatherings at his home to discover a call that is inextricably linked to the liberation of Black bodies. I am revived by this giant thinker who has remained humble while monumentally influencing religious study.

—Nikia Smith Robert, M.Div. '09

A Collision Course with Reality

The Rise and Fall of Union's School of Sacred Music By Maureen Morgan

WHEN DR. CLARENCE DICKENSON and his wife, Helen, founded Union Seminary's School of Sacred Music in 1928, they imagined an institution that trained clergy and musicians together, creating true partners in the work of the church. Though the school did foster some interaction between the disciplines, the musicians learned more about the church than the clergy learned about music. Musicians were required to earn 10 credits (out of 60) from the Seminary, while seminarians were not required to obtain any credits from the music school, even though many would be in charge of hymn selection out in the field.

Over time, music acceptable to the music school leaders became more restricted, tending toward Bach and earlier composers. When I graduated in 1963, I thought I had a clear notion of what was appropriate in my role as a church musician. However, in the next five years, the growing peace movement and multiple assassinations roiled the country, challenging all its institutions. With its limited approach to liturgical possibilities, the music school was on a collision course with reality.

The watershed year was 1968. Across from the Seminary, a massive anti-war demonstration upended the campus of

Columbia University. Student activist Mark Rudd locked the president in the administration building. Seminarians joined in the melee. The musicians, however, were told to "just keep practicing."

In my work at Pleasantville (N.Y.) Presbyterian Church during this period, I was encouraged by two teenage girls to burst out of the strictures of my music school training. A resulting liturgy entitled "Music from the Young for Everyone" induced tears in the congregation. It was the first time guitars were heard in a Protestant church in Westchester County.



Maureen Morgan, S.M.M. '63

“The watershed year was 1968. Across from the Seminary, a massive anti-war demonstration upended the campus of Columbia University. Student activist Mark Rudd locked the president in the administration building. Seminarians joined in the melee. The musicians, however, were told to ‘just keep practicing.’”

In 1970, Dr. J. Brooke Mosley became president of Union and began in-depth discussions on the future of the Seminary. It was soon clear that the music school was not in those plans. Two years later, Dr. Robert Baker, head of the music school, declared that the school should close because funds were inadequate to maintain the quality of training that undergirded the school's reputation. The Seminary had prohibited the music school from raising its own financial support to avoid any conflict with fundraising for the Seminary.

However, money may not have been the only reason for the school's closing. In a 1971 letter, Dr. Leonard Raver, Director of Music at General Theological Seminary, a seminary of the Episcopal Church, claimed that Union's music school had not moved with the times and no longer spoke to the church. He said Dr. Baker had resisted all efforts at musical renewal and exploring liturgical options.

Meanwhile, the need for trained church musicians did not go away. The Roman Catholic Church had been expanding the role of music in the church and creating new full-time musical positions. There being few trained Catholic musicians, the church frequently hired trained Protestant musicians to lead the way.

Contrary to popular opinion at Union, the School of Sacred Music did not move to Yale when it closed in 1973. Several faculty members, the music library, and the remaining music endowments went to the new Yale Institute of Sacred Music. Graduates of Union's music school remained graduates of Union Seminary; their degrees were not transferred to Yale. Though the music school died at Union, its heritage lives on in the many churches served by its graduates. **U**

Frosted Hospitality

By Benjamin Perry

A Couple's Passion for Cake-Baking Helps Them Reimagine Gift-Giving

PHOTO: LAURA VANDERZEE



FIRST-YEAR M.Div. student Krystal Hanegan and her husband, Michael, are visionary bakers. Their company, Cake the World a Better Place, has designed hundreds of one-of-a-kind cakes that channel recipients' lives into confections that are as tasty as they are touching.

The two began their unlikely journey with a cake they made for their son's first birthday. "We didn't think it would take very long," Michael laughs, "but we ended up literally pulling an all-nighter."

Despite this inauspicious beginning, they were hooked. Their creations soon became ubiquitous at friends' birthday parties—a refreshing change from the bland monotony of store-bought sheet cakes. It didn't take long, however, before Krystal and Michael recognized their baking's potential to speak to life's deeper moments, as well.

Their favorites are cakes they made for Bella, the daughter of Michael's best friend. "The morning after Father's Day, we found out she had leukemia," Michael says. "She was four." They made a small cake for Bella, delivered with a bunny she could hold while undergoing chemotherapy. "Sharing that cake in the

oncology ward with her family," he adds, "was a sacred meal." Then, one year later, they had a chance to make a cake for the birthday celebration that no one was sure would come. "It's not my most technically crafted cake," Krystal admits, "but it is a cake that celebrates the life of a little girl who is irreplaceable to her family and the world."

The Hanegans are overjoyed not only by the difference their cakes have made in others' lives but by the effect cake making has had on their family. "It's helped our children recognize that there are lots of ways to bring gifts to the people you care about," Michael observes. Krystal concurs, adding that it's "shaped them to welcome more people into our lives, not as guests or visitors but as family."

She views this mission of welcome as something that far exceeds concrete offerings of flour and sugar. "We have to stop thinking about hospitality as a program, or something that is just a gift to certain people," she says, but instead rethink gift-giving within the larger frame of what it means to live in community.

The Hanegans have discovered their art's ability to transform gatherings and enrich the lives of those around them. "Birthdays get buried in birthday presents," Michael says. "The thing I've enjoyed the most is watching the way that the center of gravity shifts back towards the person we're celebrating and towards each other."

Krystal agrees. "It's about intentionally shaping our communities towards sharing, caring, providing, and concrete practices of welcome and inclusion." As Michael notes, all gatherings should aspire to foster this atmosphere of mutuality and love. "Host and guest become really blurry, which is just good theology," he says.

It's a testament to how this family is making the world a better place, one cake at a time. **U**

VISIT: caketheworld.com

1950s

James B. McGregor, S.M.M. '59, has been appointed interim music director at Old First Presbyterian Church in Newark, N.J.

1960s

Marcia Kaplan Williams Rudin, M.A. in Religion, '65, has published two novels, *Hear My Voice* and *Flower Toward the Sun*, under the name Marcia R. Rudin. Both novels deal with interfaith Jewish-Christian relations. Rudin taught history of religion at a college in New Jersey and then spent 30 years working to combat destructive cults. Seven of her plays have received 12 productions. She lives in Manhattan and Florida with her husband, Rabbi James Rudin.

George J. Tanabe Jr., M.Div. '69, and his wife, Willa Tanabe, recently published *Japanese Buddhist Temples in Hawaii: An Illustrated Guide* (University of Hawaii Press). He is professor emeritus of religion at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and a specialist on the religions of Japan, especially Buddhism; his books have been published by university presses at Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, and Hawaii. Willa Tanabe is professor emerita of Japanese art history, also at the University of Hawaii.

1970s

Kenneth J. Dale, Ph.D. '71, was honored to have a new institute at the Lutheran College and Seminary in Tokyo named "The Dale Pastoral Center" in appreciation for his work in pastoral studies and clinical services during his 35 years of teaching there. In May 2016 he delivered a public lecture at the Center, in Japanese, titled "A 21st-Century Pastoral Understanding of Human Nature." Dale lives with his wife, Eloise, in Pilgrim Place, a retirement community in Claremont, Calif.

Lawrence E. Allen, S.M.M. '73, performed as organ soloist for Saint-Saëns' Organ Symphony with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in September 2017. He is currently director of music and organist at Mt. Lebanon

Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh, after serving in the same capacity at Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford, Conn., for 30 years. He was also head of the Organ Department at the Hartt School of Music from 1992 to 2004.

William A. Wylie-Kellermann, M.Div. '75, published two new books in 2017: *Where the Water Goes Around: Beloved Detroit*, about 30 years of struggle and movement ministry there, including current resistance to the bankruptcy and water shut-offs; and *Principalities in Particular: A Practical Theology of the Powers That Be*, which addresses a range of topics, from barbed wire and nuclear weapons to climate change and labor struggle, even the Trump "Powers," all rooted in direct action and teaching.

1980s

Dawn McGuire, M.Div. '82, has published a new volume of poetry, *American Dream with Exit Wound*. A graduate of the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, McGuire is adjunct professor of neurology at the Neurosciences Institute of Morehouse School of Medicine and divides her time between Atlanta and Northern California. Her poems have appeared in various literary magazine and anthologies, including the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) and the *Journal of American Neurology*, and she has won several poetry awards.

Steven R. McClelland, M.Div. '86, has published *Telling It Like It Is: The Gospel of God's Kingdom*. He and his wife, Dotty, are the parents of four daughters. They have lived in Bergen County, N.J., for two decades.

Julie Faith Parker, M.Div. '88, has been appointed associate professor of Old Testament at General Theological Seminary, New York City, effective July 1, upon her conclusion at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. She has just published *My So-Called Biblical Life: Imagined Stories from the World's Best-Selling Book*, a resource for classes, book groups, seminars, sermons, and retreats, the book transforms one-dimensional portrayals of Bible characters

into stories of vibrant individuals whose hopes and struggles still speak to us today.

Mark D. Dawson, M.Div. '89, was ordained January 7 into the Holy Order of Deacons of the Episcopal Church on the Feast of the Epiphany. He reports from Pasadena, Calif., that he is still keeping his day job, which is director of development for the Harry S. Truman Foundation, but will also be doing volunteer work for his bishop.

1990s

Nancy I. Haught, M.A. '92, has published *Sacred Strangers: What the Bible's Outsiders Can Teach Christians* (Liturgical Press), a close look at six biblical stories in which strangers act heroically: Hagar, Rahab, Naaman, the magi, the Samaritan woman at the well, and the Syrophenician mother who pleads for her daughter. All show the need to open our hearts to immigrants, refugees, and anyone we consider "the other." Haught, an award-winning journalist who covered religion and spirituality for *The Oregonian* for many years, is now retired and lives in Portland, Ore.

Teresa Delgado, M.A. '93, Ph.D. '05, has published *A Puerto Rican Decolonial Theology: Prophecy Freedom*. The book explores the themes of identity, suffering, and hope in the stories of Puerto Rican people to surface the anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology of a Puerto Rican decolonial theology. Delgado is a professor in the Religious Studies Department and director of Peace and Justice Studies at Iona College in New Rochelle, N.Y.

Theresa A. Troia, part. '94, has been named president of Project Hospitality on Staten Island. She has served as executive director there for 30 years and will devote her work to leading the agency's community-based and foundation-funded programs as well as directing the agency's advancement efforts and program and housing development.

Martin R. Noland, Ph.D. '96, was installed as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) in San Mateo, Calif., on June 4, 2017.

Martin C. Lehfeldt, M.Div. '65

Atlanta, Ga.



EDITOR'S NOTE: In 2008 Martin Lehfeldt stepped down as president of the Southeastern Council of Foundations, a membership association of more than 360 grant makers working to strengthen the not-for-profit sector in an 11-state region. He is also a former board chair of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s only historically Black institution of theological education. Currently he is a writer, speaker, and consultant as well as an active layperson at Atlanta's Central Presbyterian Church.

What have you done since leaving Union?

In 1965, after dropping out of Union for a year to work at a church in Harlem, I chose not to be ordained and instead stumbled into a position at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation in Princeton. I spent the next four years directing a program that recruited primarily white former Wilson and Danforth Fellows for the faculties of historically Black colleges. From there, I went south in 1969 to Clark College—now Clark Atlanta University—as Vice President for Development for what I assumed would be a brief cultural experience. It turned out to be a seven-year stint, followed by another three years as Director of Development for the Atlanta University Center.

Those 10 years provided wonderful on-the-job training in fund-raising, as well as a rare opportunity for a white person to work and live in a Black community. I subsequently started my own consulting firm to help a wide variety of not-for-profit organizations at the local, regional, and national levels do planning and raise money. The company stayed busy for 18 years. My last client was the Southeastern Council of Foundations, for which I directed an initiative to establish and strengthen community foundations around the region. That assignment led to me being selected as president of the organization for the next 11 years.

Now in retirement, I'm working on a book about foundation activity in our region, which began with northern philanthropists coming to the South to help after the Civil War. The book describes their work during Reconstruction and the difficult times of Jim Crow and then charts the formation and growth of Southern foundations through the Depression, the post-World War II days, and the Civil Rights Movement to the present day.

I've finally managed to step down from almost all of the many nonprofit boards and committees on which I served. Instead, once a week, I bake bread, which we distribute, along with good coffee, to homeless people who gather in our church courtyard on Sunday mornings. It's a remarkable ministry of personalized hospitality.

What have you most enjoyed about your career?

I've spent my entire career in the not-for-profit sector and have loved it, despite having taken a 30-percent pay cut every time I took a new job. I've always been drawn to struggling institutions. I enjoy the work of helping solve their organizational problems and raising money to enable them to address important needs.

How did Union prepare you for all of this work?

I really didn't want to go to Union—my preference was Columbia's School of Journalism—but I had a Lutheran pastor father and grandfather, so my fate was sealed. Instead of writing news stories, I wound up composing sermons under Edmund Steimle's tutelage.

My father had already indoctrinated me with Walter Rauschenbusch's thinking, but Union further sharpened my social justice instincts and exposed me to a broader range of ministries beyond the congregation.

How do you stay connected to Union?

Although I've given a token amount of financial support to Union over the years, I have not done a good job of staying in touch. But my classmate and colleague, Wyndham Anderson '64, can be wonderfully persistent and has pulled me back in. Until recently, Union never had an especially good outreach program, so it's good that the Union Alumni/ae Network is growing.

What would you say to someone considering going to Union?

If you can afford to go, then go—or find someone who can help you pay for a seminary education. Union gave us a wonderful exposure to critical biblical studies and social justice ministries. Back in the day, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund fellowship program helped make it possible for many people who later went into other careers to be exposed to an academically rigorous program of study and field work that influenced the rest of their lives. Thanks to Union, I am unable to look at life any other way except through the lens of social justice. I hope that tradition will continue for a long time. **U**

Takashi James Koder, M.A. '72, M.Phil. '74, Ph.D. '76

Wellesley, Mass.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jim Koder was just elected to serve as a member of Union's Alumni/ae Council.



What do you do?

After teaching for three years at Oberlin College, 1973–76, I moved to Wellesley College in 1976, where I am now Professor of Religion. My teaching field is Comparative and Historical Study of Religion, with a focus on Asia, especially Buddhism. Asia, a Greek term, has always referred to a large geographical

and cultural area; many religions have come from Asia. Many of the earliest Christian churches were in "Asia Minor," today's Turkey. One of my many interests is the inner connection between contemplation and action. Currently, I am working on research on Takashi Paul Nagai, a Christian convert, radiologist, atomic bomb survivor (for six years), and pacifist. He is the main reason Nagasaki is known today as the "city of prayer," while Hiroshima is the "city of anger."

How did Union prepare you for this?

I benefited in so many different ways from Union: courses I took at Columbia, community at Union, among others. Union's historic commitment to activism has inspired and shaped me, now as an educator and an Episcopal priest. In 1985 I was the first Asian American ordained in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, one of the charter dioceses, going back to 1784.

What is the best thing about your job?

Too many to cite! Among them: opportunities to challenge young minds and to inspire them into a service vocation, whatever profession they may choose. I also cherish the opportunity to study the global human communities.

How have you stayed connected to Union?

Mostly through fellow graduates, both in the United States and abroad.

What would you say to someone considering going to Union?

Be inspired, be empowered, so that they can reciprocate the vocation of inquiry and service. **U**

Angela Moscheo Benson, M.A. in Church History, '06, M.A. in Religion and Education, '10

Nashville, Tenn.

What do you do?

After teaching for the past decade, I accepted a job earlier this year at Cumberland Heights, an internationally renowned drug and alcohol treatment facility. In addition to leading interreligious services, I also teach group classes on 12-Step spirituality and on religion, guilt and shame, anger and resentment, and loss and grief. I also am the pastoral care director, so I regularly counsel individuals and families about issues surrounding spirituality and religion and other recovery needs.

How did Union prepare you for this?

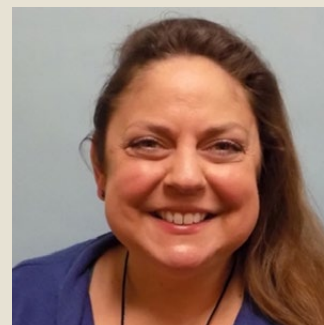
At Union I was able to have rigorous discourse with people from a variety of faith traditions, an opportunity that regularly informs my work today. I also took advantage of the opportunity to attend classes at Columbia's Teachers College. Those courses related directly to my professional goal of becoming a chaplain and teacher of religion, a goal I have reached with my current position.

What is the best thing about your job?

I get paid to have in-depth theological and philosophical conversations every day. In turn, I have the honor of ministering to the spiritually wounded.

How have you stayed connected to Union?

I return to Union at least once a year to attend a chapel service, participate in a seminar, or even sit in on a class. The Landmark Guest



Rooms are a great way to be on campus and in the city I love, where I can meet up with old friends and classmates. I also stay in touch with a number of my classmates and a few of my professors through email.

What would you say to someone considering going to Union?

UTS is an opportunity of a lifetime. I felt honored to be chosen

to attend the school where every one of my favorite theologians either attended, taught, or both. In addition to the academic growth, the various service and field ed. positions allow each student to grow in her/his chosen profession. And it is a small campus that provides for the forming and building of lifelong friendships. **U**

This is the fourth LCMS parish he has served as pastor since his ordination in 1984. Two of those parishes were in the Chicago metro region; another was in Evansville, Indiana. He also served from 2002–08 as director of the Concordia Historical Institute in Saint Louis, which is the LCMS department of Archives and History. Noland and his wife, Karla, reside in San Mateo with their youngest daughter, Heidi. Their two older daughters, Sarah and Renee, are attending college in Indiana.

Rebecca Todd Peters, M.Div. '96, Ph.D. '01, has published *Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice*. Peters interweaves political analysis, sociology, ancient and modern philosophy, Christian tradition, and medical history. She grounds the book's analysis in the material reality of women's lives and their decisions about sexuality, abortion, and child-bearing. The book ends with a powerful re-imagining of the moral contours of prenatal life and suggests recognizing pregnancy as a time when a woman must assent, again and again, to an ethical relationship with the pre-nate.

Davina C. Lopez, M.A. '99, Ph.D. '06, has received the Lloyd W. Chapin (UTS '67) Award for Excellence in Scholarship and the Arts at Eckerd College in St Petersburg, Fla. In 2016, she was promoted to professor of religious studies at Eckerd.

2000s

Patrick Shu-Hsiang Cheng, M.A. '01, Ph.D. '10, was appointed associate rector at Church of the Transfiguration in New York City and installed September 17, 2017.

Jocelyn A. Emerson, M.Div. '01, began a new call as pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Rio Rancho, NM, in February. She has also launched a spirituality and healing business, Weaving Sacred Spaces, that offers spiritual direction (in person and online), as well as crystal healing, energy work, and more. As part of her healing practice, she has created a line of flower essences, High Desert Essences. Weaving Sacred Spaces can be found online at jocelynememerson.net.

Letitia M. Campbell, M.Div. '03, was ordained to the ministry September 17, 2017, at Central Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Ga. Campbell is assistant professor in the Practice of Ethics and Society; director of Contextual Education I and Clinical Pastoral Education; and senior program coordinator, Laney Legacy Program in Moral Leadership, at Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

Hakim J. Lucas, M.Div. '03, was installed September 1, 2017, as the 13th president and chief executive officer of Virginia Union University. For the last five years, he served as vice president for institutional advancement at Bethune-Cookman University in Florida. Lucas holds a doctorate in education from Fordham University.

Joshua H. Steward, M.Div. '04, married Emily Steward (Klotz) July 22, 2017. He also had a second church added to his United Methodist appointment and now serves Sheridan Park and Wesley United Methodist churches in Des Moines, Iowa.

Amy C. Gopp, M.Div. '05, has been called to be senior pastor of Kent (Ohio) United Church of Christ. Gopp, who grew up in Kent, is the first female to serve as pastor of the church since it formed nearly 200 years ago.

Jennifer M. Phillips, M.Div. '05, was appointed Creation Care program manager for the United Methodist Committee on Relief, effective July 1, 2017. She coordinates training for EarthKeepers, a new grassroots program to equip and certify laity and clergy for creation care ministries, and monitors and reports on emerging trends and issues related to climate change and humanitarian concerns.

Miguel A. Escobar, M.Div. '07, has been appointed director of Anglican Studies for the Episcopal Divinity School at Union. An Episcopal Church leader experienced in developing educational programs for lay and clergy, Escobar was previously managing program director for Leadership, Communications, and External Affairs at the Episcopal Church Foundation.

Andrew J.S. Paton, M.Div. '09, and his wife, Selene Kaye, welcomed a daughter, Serafina Wenying Paton-Kaye, on November 10, 2017. She was born in the front seat of "a red Honda Fit traveling at about 60 mph in a 30-mph zone" on their way to the hospital, Drew later reported on Facebook. He went on: "Selene called out, 'She's born!' As I turned in disbelief, I saw Selene's hands moving deftly, powerfully, to bring the child into the world and onto her chest—as if she had done it a thousand times before ... Here's to the kid who almost literally kicked down the door just to get into this world—and to the amazing, badass mama who delivered her own baby in a speeding car." Serafina Wenying was later welcomed home by big brother Beckett Shengqi Paton-Kaye, who was born February 23, 2016.

2010s

Thomas D. Frenz, S.T.M. '11, was ordained September 10, 2017, by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Germany. On September 27, 2017, he married Hsinyi Chen, a Columbia School of Social Work graduate he met during his Union studies. He then relocated to his wife's hometown, Taipei, Taiwan, where he is pursuing doctoral studies in the field of business ethics and serving as pastor on a voluntary basis at Suang-Lien Presbyterian Church English Ministry.

Jennifer Sue Lindsay, M.Div. '11, is living in Rome, where she works for KAICIID, an intergovernmental organization whose mandate is to promote the use of dialogue globally to prevent and resolve conflict and to enhance understanding and cooperation. She also works as a documentarian for the Institute for the Bio-Cultural Study of Religion in Boston, where she combines her filmmaking and storytelling expertise with her ethnographic and scientific training in the study of religion. Lindsay lives with her Zen Buddhist husband in Rome and belongs to the Reformed Jewish community of Beth Hillel. She plans to defend her Ph.D. dissertation in religion at Boston University this spring.



Mónica Maher (center, wearing orange scarf) with participants in AVP Trauma Resiliency and Training of Trainers workshop that recently took place in Argentina.

“ I love my jobs because they draw upon both my academic and pastoral training and allow me to meet a wide variety of amazing people at the level of mind, heart, and soul.”

Mónica Maher, Ph.D. '04

Quito, Ecuador, and Cambridge, Mass.

What do you do?

I am a visiting professor of Philosophy, Sociology, and Gender Studies at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in Ecuador and a Zen dharma teacher. I serve as the initiative coordinator of the Latin American Program of Friends Peace Teams (Quakers), facilitating peacebuilding work in Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Ordained in the United Church of Christ, I act as the community minister for Latin America of First Church in Cambridge, Mass.

How did Union prepare you for this?

Union is a place of great student diversity, academic challenge, and activist energy. It gave me the confidence to step out of my comfort zone, which I have continued to do as a practice of lifelong learning. emilie townes taught me to tackle the hardest ethical issues with hope for justice making as a public theologian; she always encouraged me in my focus on Latin America, inviting me to serve as a leader/translator for her travel seminar in Brazil. **Chung Hyun Kyung '89** opened the doors to interfaith dialogue,

interreligious belonging, and international peacebuilding. During my last year at Union, I accompanied her to an international peace conference of religious leaders in Jordan that deeply affected my sense of what was possible. **Janet Walton '79** modeled creativity and risk-taking in the classroom, challenging me to teach through symbols, stories, and surprise. I could go on about the faculty, not to mention the stimulation and inspiration of other students.

What is the best thing about your job?

I love my jobs because they draw upon both my academic and pastoral training and allow me to meet a wide variety of amazing people at the level of mind, heart, and soul. My talented graduate students come from throughout Latin America and are deeply committed to justice. My peacebuilding colleagues are incredibly creative and courageous in the face of extreme violence. I work with ex-gang members in prison in Honduras, ex-FARC guerilla members in Colombia, National Civil Police in Guatemala, war survivors in El Salvador, refugee women in Ecuador, and

indigenous and Afro-descendent communities in Honduras defending their ancestral lands. Every encounter inspires me to risk more fully in working for just peace.

How have you stayed connected to Union?

Union has stayed connected to me! When I am in the United States, I attend alumni/ae meetings and visit the campus. Last year, I organized a travel seminar course in Ecuador for 12 Union students with Professor Chung Hyun Kyung. That was a fantastic experience. In addition, I remain in touch with my dear doctoral colleagues and my mentor, emilie townes, who continue to inspire me deeply as ground-breaking academic leaders.

What would you say to someone considering going to Union?

Go for it. It will change your life direction in unimaginable ways and allow you to live life to your fullest, engaging with the most difficult situations of suffering and injustice in order to make a difference in a great sea of global change, with the faith that the arc of history does indeed bend toward justice. **U**

Julie M. Johnson Staples, M.Div. '11, has been named executive director of Intersections, a global, nongovernmental organization, with special consultative status at the United Nations, that serves as a catalyst to unite disparate groups to forge a common ground in global peace, justice, and reconciliation. Prior to joining Intersections, Johnson Staples served as interim senior pastor of Flatbush-Tompkins Congregational Church in Brooklyn, N.Y. She succeeds Intersections' founding director, the Rev. Robert Chase, who retired earlier this year.

Leslie Lynnwood Christopher Jackson, M.Div. '12, has been installed as pastor of Cathedral of Hope Houston in West Houston, Texas.

Aidan W. Owen, M.Div. '13, was ordained to the diaconate at Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, N.Y., November 14, 2017. The Rev. Matthew Wright preached the sermon and reminded those present that the diaconal vocation is about participating in and witnessing in the world—and bringing that back to the church for its edification. Several of Owen's friends and relatives attended to witness his ordination and help him celebrate.

Andrew J. Schwartz, M.Div. '13, married Emily Flanders November 4, 2017. The couple have changed their last name to Flanders Schwartz.

Brian S. Gillis, M.Div. '14, has announced his engagement to Jakarta Mato. "I'm ENGAGED and SHE ASKED ME!" he reported exuberantly on Facebook. "My fiancée is from Hawaii, so we created a ritual reflecting her culture after her proposal. I'm so grateful for Union for teaching me how to love positive, affirming, community ritual."

Julia Macy Stroud, M.Div. '14, married Caitlin Elizabeth Offinger October 7, 2017, at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields in Manhattan. Stroud is a program minister at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Brooklyn and a candidate for ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Diocese of New York. Offinger is vice president of business development for BerlinRosen, a public affairs firm in Manhattan.

Ashley Amber Birt, M.Div. '14, was ordained to the ministry February 18 at East Liberty Presbyterian Church (ELPC) in Pittsburgh. She grew up as a member of ELPC and currently serves as the Pastoral Fellow for Youth and Families at Rutgers Presbyterian Church in New York City.

Emily S. Brewer, M.Div. '15, was ordained to the ministry October 1, 2017, at Rutgers Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. Brewer is executive director of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.

Emily Castaneda, M.A. '15, married Jessica Esquivel April 24, 2017, and has changed her name to Emily Esquivel. She recently graduated from the Institute for Clinical Social Work with her M.A. in Clinical Counseling and Psychotherapy and is now working as a psychotherapist at the Center for Religion and Psychotherapy in Chicago.

Samantha Gonzalez-Block, M.Div. '15, and **Matthew Hoffman, M.Div. '15**, became engaged January 19 in Asheville, N.C. They met nearly five and a half years ago as first-year students during Union orientation. Gonzalez-Block is associate pastor of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville, and Hoffman is a vicar (intern) in the Lutheran Church and instructor in the Religious Studies Department at Warren Wilson College.

Emily F. Hamilton, M.Div. '15, was installed November 19, 2017, as pastor of First Lutheran Church in Malden, Mass.

Terris G. Krueger, M.Div. '15, was ordained to the ministry February 17 at Advent Lutheran Church in New York City.

Benjamin J. Perry, M.Div. '15, married Erin Mayer November 4, 2017. He was ordained to the ministry January 21 at Bedford (N.Y.) Presbyterian Church.

Amir S. M. Tawadrous, S.T.M. '15, has been called as pastor of Amherst (N.Y.) Presbyterian Church. Previously he served two yoked congregations, Southridge Presbyterian Church in Roeland Park, Kan., and Argentine United Presbyterian Church in Kansas City.

Devon L. Thomas, M.Div. '15, has been called to serve as the settled pastor of Waterville (Vt.) Union Church and Second Congregational Church of Jeffersonville, Vt. Previously he was interim associate pastor of First Congregational Church in Essex Junction, Vt.

Bruce P. Lamb, M.Div. '16, has been appointed interim associate minister of Youth and Young Adults at the Riverside Church in New York City.

Jason A. Storbakken, M.Div. '16, was installed October 1, 2017, as pastor of Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship in New York City.

Elizabeth Colmant Estes, M.Div. '17, has published an article, "To Save America's Soul, We Need an Ecumenism of Love," in the magazine *America: The Jesuit Review of Faith and Culture*. Estes works with undocumented immigrants in New Jersey.

Guthrie L. Graves-Fitzsimmons, M.Div. '17, has launched a newsletter for the religious left titled *The Resistance Prays*. Its tagline: "Defeat Trumpism through spiritual and political action." A self-described news junkie, Graves-Fitzsimmons works as a faith-based issues advocate in Louisville, Ky. [U](#)



To submit a class note or death notice, please contact **Emily Odom**, Director of Alumni/ae Relations, at eodom@uts.columbia.edu or 212-280-1419.

Anne Hale Johnson, M.Div. '56, Union Medalist '05, Unitas Distinguished Alumna '08, Board Chair Emerita, Dies



“Her indomitable spirit, her love of life, and her commitment to justice, especially women’s rights, never wavered.”

— President Jones

The Union Theological Seminary community is saddened by the death of beloved friend Anne Hale Johnson '56, who served nearly a quarter of a century on the Seminary’s board of trustees. She died January 18 at age 94.

“Our magnificent mother was embraced by the arms of the Lord,” wrote her children, Joy and Randy, to family and friends. “In your love for her may you find light.”

“We celebrate the powerful, unstoppable life of Anne Hale Johnson, affectionately referred to as ‘the Mother of Union,’” said the Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, president of Union Seminary. “Her indomitable spirit, her love of life, and her commitment to justice, especially women’s rights, never wavered. She embodied the best of what the Seminary strives to cultivate—a life of service and of love.”

A student of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr in the 1950s, Johnson became a supremely loyal alumna. While serving on the Union board from 1990 to 2014, she occupied a seat on every conceivable committee and served as board chair from 1996 to 2005.

In 2005, the Seminary awarded her its highest honor, the Union Medal, for her lifetime ministry to her church locally and nationally, her support of ecumenical organizations, her progressive political activism, her advocacy for women’s empowerment globally, and her inspired leadership.

She transformed “what is” into “what can be” through her leadership and generous philanthropy. After the tragic death of their daughter in the 1987 Amtrak crash, Johnson and her husband, Arthur William Johnson, generously endowed in her memory the Christiane Brooks Johnson Memorial Chair of Psychiatry and Religion at Union. They joined other families who had lost loved ones in founding a lobby, “Safe Travel America,” to pass legislation for drug and alcohol testing for transportation providers.

“It took five years of lobbying to get the law passed (October 1991),” Anne Johnson wrote in February 1994. “Only this year have rules been issued to implement that law.”

When Johnson retired from the Union board in 2014, her service was recognized in a board resolution. She strengthened “the Seminary as she spearheaded a successful \$39 million campaign,” the resolution noted, and she “endeared herself to all who know her for her warmth; her strong commitment to feminism and progressive, inclusive Protestantism; her sense of humor; her optimism; her deep Christian faith and her unstinting loyalty to the institutional church.”

The board of trustees gave “thanks to Almighty God for this beautiful saint, who, like a stained glass window, has let God’s light shine through her work and person,” and offered her their “loving admiration” and “tremendously high regard.”

Johnson’s husband, her daughter Christiane, and her youngest grandchild, Ezra Griffith Carlson, preceded her in death. She is survived by her daughter Joy Sanborn Johnson of Denver, Colo.; her son, Randall Hale (Elise Middleton) Johnson of Frederick, Md.; and her granddaughter Vivian Brooks Carlson of New York City. A celebration of her life was held March 3 at Georgetown Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. —Leah Rousmaniere

On April 27, 2018, Union Theological Seminary held a special Memorial Service of Celebration in Johnson’s honor in James Chapel, followed by a reception in the Seminary’s refectory, where her portrait hangs.

Robert A. Evans, Ph.D. '69, Unitas Distinguished Alumnus '17, Nobel Peace Prize Nominee, Dies

The community of Union Theological Seminary was sad to learn that the Rev. Dr. Robert A. Evans died January 25 of pulmonary fibrosis. He was 80.

As executive director and co-founder, with his wife, Alice, of the Plowshares Institute, Evans devoted his life to transforming conflict and pursuing peace around the world. After earning his Ph.D. in the joint Union-Columbia doctoral program in 1969, Evans held a series of academic positions. He helped shape new and constructive pedagogies in the academy through his work and publications, including such notable books as *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor* and *The Globalization of Theological Education*. Together, Bob and Alice Evans authored 12 books, taught hundreds of workshops, and led more than 1,000 leaders from industrialized countries overseas in immersion seminars following the inception of Plowshares. Seminar participants met celebrated activists such as South African theologian Archbishop Desmond Tutu as well as local educational, political, and religious leaders.

"I don't know of anyone who went on one of those trips whose life wasn't changed," Nancy Hajek told the *Hartford*



Courant. She said Evans "wanted people to think about what could be done to change economic and political conditions." Hajek was so affected by a trip to East Africa that she went to work for Plowshares.

In 2002, Plowshares, Alice and Bob Evans were nominated by members of the South African Parliament for the Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of their contributions towards a peaceful end to the apartheid system in South Africa.

After graduating from college in 1959, Evans enrolled in the University of Edinburgh, where he met his future wife, Alice Frazer, an Alabaman studying in

Scotland. He later enrolled in Yale Divinity School and went on to study at Union and Columbia. Evans was also ordained as a Presbyterian minister.

After teaching at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, Bob and Alice took their family to Uganda, where Bob began teaching in an exchange program. The policies of dictator Idi Amin, however, soon forced them to leave. According to their son, Allen, quoted by the *Hartford Courant*, Bob, Alice, and their three young children were smuggled out of the country, hidden under blankets in a jeep.

In 1981, Bob and Alice started the Plowshares Institute. "The purpose of Plowshares was to help create a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world community," Hajek said. "He wanted to 'transform the non-poor,' and make them realize how they could change things."

In 2015, when Bob and Alice decided to retire, they transferred the assets of Plowshares to Hartford Seminary to use in its peacemaking program.

Evans is survived by his wife, Alice; his son, Allen; two daughters, Melinda Yocum and Judith Smith; and six grandchildren.

—Leah Rousmaniere

IN MEMORIAM AS OF MARCH 1, 2018

Alumni/ae

Harvey H. Guthrie, Jr. '46	Jovan Brkic '59
Joseph E. Thompson '48	John Curtis Raines '59, '67
Glenn H. Rudisill '49	Jeffrey D. Smith '59
Richard A. Thornburg '51	Herbert N. Christ '60
Larry A. Jackson '53	Robert L. Huddleston '62
Mary Jane Baxter Sailer '53	John G. Wightman '62
Charles S. Wilhite '53	Hope Gwendlyn Phillips Koski '63
Dewey F. Fagerburg '54	Richard E. Wiborg '63
Raymond F. Glover '54	Fred B. Cunningham '64
William J. Richard, Jr. '54	William T. Heil, Jr. '64
William G. Morrice '55	Ronald Edward Ohl '64
Albert R. Vogeler '55	David A. Stevens '64
Henry H. Hobbs '56	Polly Berrien Berends '65
Robert W. Howard '56	Ronald N. Ham '66
Anne Hale Johnson '56	Neale A. Secor '66
Maurice M. Anderson '57	

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Kristen K. Wee

Edward J. Zimmerli '66
William A. Vestal '68
Robert C. Worley '68
Robert A. Evans '69
Mark A. Sellers '69
Dennis Stuart Murphy '70
Walter W. Witte '70
Edward H. Wright '70
Lawrence N. Hill '73
Anne L. Moshier Guild-Donovan '79
Dorothy Watkins Martyn '80
Deborah Steely '82
Marjorie Wood Parsons '87
Douglas Doyn Knight '01

ALUMNI/AE GATHERINGS

PHOTO: PHILIP MCCOLLUM



➡ Union alumni/ae from Atlanta joined Professor Gary Dorrien, M.Div. '78, on February 15 at a reception after his speech to the 151st Founder's Day Convocation at Morehouse College. Left to right: Oscar McCloud, M.Div. '61; Raphael Warnock, Ph.D. '06; Dr. Dorrien; Martin Leheldt, M.Div. '65; Berta Irwin; James Irwin, M.Div. '62.

⬇ Greater San Francisco area alums gathered on March 18 in Oakland, Calif., to hear a lecture by the Rev. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White, Union's Christiane Brooks Johnson Professor of Psychology & Religion. From left to right: Christopher Jones '13, Eric Nefstead '95, Emily Emders Odom '90, director of Alumni/ae Relations, Peter Ohm (partner of David Cowell), David Cowell '94, Dr. Cooper-White, Jim Russ '66, and Karen Bloomquist '82.



PHOTO: MICHAEL COOPER-WHITE

⬆ A lively alum gathering was held at the Albuquerque home of Takako Suzuki Terino '08 on January 26. This active chapter already has another event planned for June 3. Visit the "Alumni/ae Events" section of the Union website for details. From left to right: Mary Stuart '76, Anna Taylor Sweringen '83, Takako Terino '08, and Gloria Carol '87.

➡ On April 4, some 80 alums, students and friends of Union attended "Identity, Suffering, and Hope in Puerto Rico and Beyond: Latinx Communities Claiming Freedom," an event organized and co-sponsored by the Office of Alumni/ae Relations and the Latinx Caucus. Presenters from left to right were: Stephanie Quintana-Martinez, M.Div. Candidate, Union Theological Seminary; Jorge Juan Rodríguez V '16, Ph.D. Candidate, Union Theological Seminary; The Rev. Canon Dr. Altagracia Perez-Bullard '85, and Dr. Teresa Delgado '93.



PHOTO: KATILAU MBINDYO

Planned Giving is an Investment in the Next Generation



“Those of us nurtured and changed by Union have a mandate to keep Union alive and thriving for the future.”

—Rev. Sharon Nordmeyer Key,
M.Div. '86

The legacy of a Union education for many alums is a well-led life—anchored by faith, centered in justice—dedicated to making a powerful, moral contribution to the world. For generations of alums, a Union degree has made their transformative experiences possible. That, and the economic conditions that allowed Union graduates to answer their call *without the burden of debt*.

Times have changed, and the costs of higher education have risen dramatically. The greatest challenge for those beginning their journey is paying for tuition and living expenses. Every Union M.Div. degree comes with an accompanying, life-altering \$50,000 in student debt. Most alums take two decades to get out from under it.


As Union Theological Seminary wrestles with such challenges within a seismically changing landscape in theological education, your investment in the next generation is key. We know that few Union alums are able to make major outright gifts of cash, securities, or other assets in their lifetimes. And so, as you make or amend your estate plans, we encourage you to consider making a bequest to Union, as the Rev. Sharon Nordmeyer Key, M.Div. '86, a member of Union's Alumni/ae Council, has done.

Key is giving back to Union Theological Seminary through her will, because the Seminary allowed her to follow her call—including setting up a full-time prison ministry while a student.

“Union totally supported me,” she says. “President Donald Shriver loaned me his car on Fridays so that I could drive to the Sing Sing Correctional Facility. I received scholarships and grants. I was able to ‘follow my heart.’”

Following her heart included a career change from being a professional opera singer in Germany and New York. “I would pass by Union and have this incredible pull to go inside and register,” she recalls. “When I came to Union, I had no sense of call, just that I had wanted to become a minister since I was a little girl. The Seminary allowed me to build a relationship with God that was based on my call and not anyone else’s.”

While at Union in the fall of 1983, Key began working with inmates and their families on visitation issues, eventually helping to establish a support network. In 1985 she also joined a program to train Sing Sing prisoners as chaplain assistants, counselors, and teachers. She later became pastor of a Congregational church in Rhode Island, where she is now retired.

Key urges other grads to support Union, the only institution she is leaving money to. “Those of us nurtured and changed by Union have a mandate to keep Union alive and thriving for the future,” she says. “If there’s ever a voice that needs to be heard, it’s Union’s. Some schools produce pastors; others produce scholars. Union produces people who change the world!” 

For information about ways to make a planned gift to Union, please contact Martin Duus, Vice President for Development, at 212.280.1426 or mduus@uts.columbia.edu or visit utsnyc.giftplans.org.

ReUNION OCTOBER 3–6 | SAVE THE DATE

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Class of 1968, 25th anniversary of the Class of 1993, and 10th anniversary of the Class of 2008. utsnyc.edu/reunion

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Trailblazers 2018

**Beyond the Temple Door There is No Promised Land:
Black Women and Challenge of God Talk in the 21st Century**

ABOVE: Conferees visit the “pop-up” exhibit designed and assembled by Betty Bolden, Carolyn Bratnober ’17, Myong Jin, Medina Jones, and Rebecca Nieto, a team of specialists from the Burke Library in collaboration with members of the conference planning team. The display featured photographs and writings of Dr. Delores S. Williams ’91, whose work and legacy the conference celebrated.

LEFT: Conference workshop presenter, Dr. Dianne M. Stewart ’97 (center), speaks with Mia Michelle McClain (left) and Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon (right) and other participants during a break.

